

# FIVE WOMEN DRAWN INTO AMAZING CRIME MYSTERY THAT IS NOW FAST APPROACHING A DRAMATIC SOLUTION

## SLAYING OF STATION AGENT HAS EXPOSED A HIDDEN SCANDAL

Wife of Ralph Brewster, Shot to Death by Four Bullets While Noise of a Passing Train Drowned Out the Reports, Is Forced to Reveal Tragedy of Her Own Birth to Defend Herself From Suspicion.

WINCHESTER, Mass., July 1.—Four bullets fired into the little Boston and Maine Railroad station of this town reverberated through two States, making a remarkable mystery out of what appeared to be a common killing and awaking echoes of social scandal hidden in several homes for decades.

As this is written the mystery is approaching solution, but the developments are overshadowing the original problem altogether.

For, in the quest of the killer, the swarm of detectives invaded homes, exposed intrigues of a generation ago, halted a honeymoon, sowed seeds of suspicion between husband and wife—then swept into new fields, leaving the community aghast by the revelations.

It was as though an unseen force suddenly bared the hearts and consciences of many men and women, then faded away, leaving the victims' intimate secrets open to the eyes of the world!

### THE STATION TRAGEDY.

Six weeks ago Ralph W. Brewster, of Pittsfield, N. H., the new Winchester station agent, was killed by pistol fire at 9:45 o'clock at night, while the B. & M. express train Boston bound, flashed crashingly past the building smothering in its roar the reports of the bullets. Except for the agent and the killer, the station was empty.

The slayer's first shot struck the agent, who was guarding several thousands of dollars in the safe, fairly in the mouth, and drilled up toward his brain. Two more bullets missed, as the stricken man staggered and swayed toward his assailant.

Then a fourth final slug of lead, fired from a pistol pressed against his coat, entered his heart, and Ralph Brewster crumpled up and died. The killer fled, leaving the money untouched. He made a clean-cut escape. Half an hour later the body was discovered by a man who entered the station to buy a ticket, and the police were confronted by a complete mystery, apparently clueless, with these questions to be answered:

What was the motive? If robbery, why was the money left untouched? What enemies did the agent have? Was there a woman hidden in his past to supply the basis for a theory of jealousy? Who was so familiar with his working hours and the train schedule as to be able to select the safest minute for the killing?

### LIGHT ON DARK PAST.

Back-tracking on Brewster's personal history they found that he was married, the father of several young children, and apparently happy. But beyond that unusual circumstances came to light. The handsome young agent was a man of higher attainments than most persons occupying his position.

He had been wealthy, the possessor of a snug fortune and had lost it, presumably in stock speculation, and the railroad job had been taken by him as a sort of stepping stone toward fortune again. Against this background stood out the devotion of his wife and the respect he had won in the local community and a clean, clear record in business.

Ralph Brewster boarded with Dr. Rolla Sargent and his wife in Woburn, near his station. Dr. Sargent said he had heard reports that the agent had been trailed from the house on the night of the killing, and this statement brought the police to the dentist's home for investigation.

Even as they went there gossip began to buzz in the village, and there were rumors that Mrs. Sargent and the slain man had been sweethearts before either married. So intense did this gossip grow that Mrs. Sargent was forced to recognize it formally and she made this explanation of their friendship:

"Ralph and I were never what you would call sweethearts. We were merely chums in a Vermont school. He was a boy of twelve and I a girl with long curls. You could hardly call that love affair, could you?"

"After our school days I had no association with Ralph until he came to town as a station agent two weeks before he was killed. I knew, of course, that he had married and had a nice wife and three children.

### FRIENDSHIP RENEWED.

"When he called me on the

telephone in Winchester, I thought he was merely visiting and was calling because we had been friends long ago. Judge my great surprise when he told me that he was working here and that he had

asked Dr. Sargent to invite him to dinner.

"He came and we learned that he did not like his boarding place in Winchester, and so as we had two rooms that we were not using, we asked him to come here and be with friends and he came. That is all there was to it."

They turned then to Brewster's wife to check up Mrs. Sargent's story, after the dentist and his wife had been interrogated until the woman's nerves were shredded by the ordeal.

They asked the newly made widow about her husband's family and her own, and she answered with a reticent nervousness that stirred the detectives' suspicion. Gossip was seething by now, and under the barbed interrogations, Mrs. Brewster revealed a phase of her own past and that of her sister which had been unsuspected by herself until about the time of the killing and she wept in humiliation as she told it. This is her story:

"I don't know whether this unhappy history of mine had any bearing on my husband's murder, but I guess it is best to make it plain now. I don't believe that robbery was the motive for the murder. There was something else back of it all.

"Until recently, I believed that the man and woman who brought me up were my father and my mother and that the woman who lived with them and afterward married Dr. Robinson was my sister.

"I was taught that from infancy, and never thought of doubting it until after my parents died recently.

"Now I have learned that they were not my parents, but my grandparents and that the 'sister' who lived with us was really my

mother, that I was her child, born out of wedlock.

SHAME SUPPRESSED.

"That was the reason for the secret. That was why I had been deceived regarding my parentage. Mrs. Robinson was not married until two and a half year after my birth. I had been passed off as the child of her parents in order to conceal the shame and disgrace of my coming into this world.

"My sister was bitterly opposed to my marriage to Ralph, for she disliked him and made him feel her dislike. He returned that feeling, but he never made any threats and never lost his temper.

"My mother married Dr. Robinson and they have two children,

## FIGURES IN MURDER MYSTERY

IS THIS THE BANDIT QUEEN? Defiantly smiling under the third degree, Miss George denied that she was involved in the Brewster shooting, although she admitted that she knew at least one of the gang under suspicion.



MRS. RUTH DAUSSMAN.  
(In Circle.)  
MRS. SARGENT.



Ralph Brewster, killed by four bullets, fired while the noise of a passing express train smothered the reports.

mother, that I was her child, born out of wedlock.

SHAME SUPPRESSED.

"That was the reason for the secret. That was why I had been deceived regarding my parentage. Mrs. Robinson was not married until two and a half year after my birth. I had been passed off as the child of her parents in order to conceal the shame and disgrace of my coming into this world.

"My sister was bitterly opposed to my marriage to Ralph, for she disliked him and made him feel her dislike. He returned that feeling, but he never made any threats and never lost his temper.

"My mother married Dr. Robinson and they have two children,

BEREAVED AND SHAMED!—Mrs. Ralph Brewster, widow of the slain station agent, and her children photographed immediately after the murder, when the wife revealed the tragedy of her own birth to defend herself from suspicion.

Kenneth and Babe, both grown up now. After I learned the story of my life, my relations with my mother, whom I had believed to be my sister, ceased. We had no open quarrel, but I ceased to have anything to do with her."

### THE LOVE OF MONEY.

Was there in this tragic recital a clue to the identity of the station agent's slayer or to the motive for the crime? The detectives turned to the wife's secret mother, who had been so opposed to the station agent. She is Mrs. Bertha Robinson, divorced wife of a Boston physician.

Mrs. Robinson bore out what her daughter had said, but insisted that she knew nothing of the crime or the motive. She had not seen Brewster since last November, she said, and it was reported that a bitter quarrel grew out of their meeting, and that Mrs. Brewster took the side of her husband, exclaiming to the woman whom she had supposed to be her sister:

"I never want to see you again."

people. But a canvass of the stock of the store and many customers failed to result in any more definite information. It was not even proved that the hat was worn by the murderer or that the murderer was a man.

Again the detectives sought a woman, cross-examining every railroad associate of the slain man and every girl with whom he was acquainted. Even Miss Caroline Greene, daughter of the chief of police of Pittsfield, and who had lived with the Brewsters, came in for questioning. But she asserted that there was nothing she knew of the killing and that the hat shown her had never been worn by anyone she knew.

Then it came out that Brewster had known the story of his wife's birth months before he was killed and that he had given much time to seeking her father. It was said that he believed he had located the man near Springfield, Mass., and that he had been brooding over the situation for some time.

### ANOTHER FAMILY SKELETON.

The detectives, now including the Winchester, Boston, Pittsfield, Woburn, and other local authorities, augmented by the State authorities of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, endeavoring to trace Mrs. Brewster's father. Whether or not they succeeded was not made known, but anyway his identity has not as yet been revealed.

But a trace of homicidal mania in the Brewster family was uncovered when the agent's family tree was followed back to Burlington through thirty years. The slain man's aunt, Mildred Brewster, shot and killed a local girl two decades ago, in a quarrel growing out of jealousy. Two years ago, this aunt was released from the State Hospital for the Insane, where she had been confined since the killing.

The station agent's mother still

## LIGHT THROWN ON DARK PAST BY WIFE OF MAN SHOT DEAD

Newly-made Widow, With Reticent Nervousness, Tears Veil From Early Life to Save Herself From Being Made Victim of Strange Situation—Secret of Parentage, Long Hidden From World, Disclosed.

direct clue from a wholly unexpected source.

### A PAL SQUEALS.

Special Officer McLaughlin, of Cambridge, arrested a man last Saturday night as a suspicious character. There was no thought in the officer's mind of the Brewster murder, nor was there anything convicting about the prisoner's appearance. McLaughlin acted merely on suspicion—or, to phrase it better, on a hunch—that the stranger would look better behind bars. At the station house the prisoner said he was Charles Tindall, of Quincy, and denied that he had committed or was planning any breach of the peace.

The police, for formality's sake, questioned him closely and by chance mentioned the Brewster murder. Tindall amazed them by declaring that he knew something of that affair, though he insisted that he had not been concerned in it. He said that Private John Lawhorn, of the marine corps, stationed at Charleston navy yard, outside Boston, had killed the station agent. He quoted the marine as having said to him, two months ago:

"Winchester looks soft for a knock-off and there's \$3,000 in the safe here, usually."

After the crime, Tindall said, Lawhorn told him he had tried to put it over, but that after killing the agent the door of the office had shut and locked itself by an inside snap. The arrival of a prospective passenger seeking a ticket had frightened the slayer away, according to Tindall's story, and so the money was untouched.

### CONFLICTING QUESTIONS.

Search at the navy yard showed that Lawhorn had been transferred about ten days after the murder to Quantico, Va. An order for his return to Charleston under guard was requested and this was ordered by the military authorities. Private Lawhorn at Quantico denied the informer's story in full.

Inquiry at Charleston revealed strange circumstances concerning Lawhorn's activities. For one thing, he was a sharpshooter of note with rifle and pistol. Would such a marksman use four bullets at short range to kill a man, and miss twice at so large a target? Would such a man, schooled in the necessity for silence, allow four reports to resound, even when a train was passing? It did not appear reasonable. Yet there was the detailed, dovetailing statement of Tindall, standing up under cross and cross-examination.

But the pistol with which Brewster was shot was an old-fashioned weapon, of a type that has been long since discarded as uncertain and cumbersome in military use. Would a marine use such a gun? Or would it not be possible that he would use it to throw off the suspicion that steel-jacketed automatic pistol bullets might draw to him?

The detectives turned to the records to ascertain Lawhorn's whereabouts on the night of the killing. To their amazement, the records showed that the suspected man had been on duty from 9 a. m. on April 20 to 9 a. m. on April 21—and the murder was done almost exactly in the middle of that period, that is, at 9:45 p. m. on April 20.

Further, messmates and petty officers of the yard stated that they had seen the accused man on duty through that time and the guards at the gate asserted that he had not passed them, while officers stated that no official pass had been issued to him.

Following this, Lawhorn broke his consistent silence to explain that he could not have committed the murder because he was on duty in the yard at the time and that he could provide an air-tight alibi for every hour.

### ANOTHER WOMAN ENTERS.

But Tindall, the man who had squealed, mentioned a girl, Ruth Claire McGowan, of Winchester, an eighteen-year-old telephone operator, as a "flame" of the marine who might know something of the case. Detectives sped to her home to question her, for by some strange chance, Ruth was one of the few inhabitants who had contributed nothing to the local gossip of the case and had not been questioned by the squads of detec-

tives. Their oversight had nearly eliminated the most fruitful source of information in the entire mystery, just as blind chance alone had delivered Tindall into their hands in a loquacious moment.

When they reached her home in Winchester the police found that the girl had disappeared—clipped! Ruth's parents said she had left two nights before to go to a motion picture show in East Woburn but that they had received a telegram from Private John Dausseman, a marine and also a sharpshooter, announcing that they had been married and were honeymooning in Stoneham, near Boston.

The bridal couple were located there in the Hotel Belmont, where Ruth, an attractive young flapper, contributed a stream of personal information about the accused soldier. She said she had met him two months ago at the navy yard and had often accompanied him on gay parties.

### THE FRIVOLOUS FLAPPER!

Sitting on the bed, with an arm around her young husband, Ruth said:

"Say what you like, I don't believe Johnny Lawhorn did that killing! He wasn't that kind of a fellow! And yet it's funny, though, isn't it, that one night he said to me:

"Ruth, I've been a bad guy, a criminal. Some day you'll learn something about me that will shock you and make you shudder. I'd like to confess to you some of the things I've done. But I'm afraid, for I love you, girlie, and I want you to keep on loving me."

"Even after he went South he wrote to me letters full of sentimental mush, but no harm in them. I showed them to Mr. Dausseman, my husband, and he tore them up! Tee-hee-hee!"

And the amorous lass cuddled closer to her bridegroom. She said she knew Tindall and that he had been a member of Lawhorn's parties often. She thought they roomed together. Dausseman, in the seventh heaven of honeymoon bliss, recalled Lawhorn as a man he disliked, but that, he explained, was mostly because the latter was interested in Ruth. As to the crime, Bridegroom Dausseman knew nothing, and cared less.

And there the mystery rests, pending the arraignment of the accused sharpshooter, with all the other clues and other women forgotten temporarily in the new development, which will lead—where?

## SHAW WRITES ON PRISON REFORM

(Continued from First Page.)

call the criminal type, making a cure impossible.

Any specific liberty which the criminal's specific defects lead him to abuse will, no doubt, be taken from him; but his right to live must be accepted in the fullest sense, and not, as at present, as merely a right to breathe and circulate his blood.

In short, a criminal must be treated, not as a man who has forfeited all moral rights and liberties by the breaking of a single law, but as one who, through some specific weaknesses, is incapable of exercising some specific liberty or liberties.

The main difficulty in applying this concept of individual freedom to the criminal arises from the fact that the concept itself is as yet unformed.

We do not apply it to children, at home or at school, nor to employees, nor to persons of any class or age who are in the power of other persons.

Like Queen Victoria, we conceive man as being either in authority or subject to authority, each person doing only what he is expressly permitted to do, or what the example of the rest of his class encourages him to consider as permitted.

The concept of the free man, who does everything he likes and everything he can unless there are express prohibitions to which he is politically a consenting party, is still unusual, and consequently terrifying, in spite of all the individualist pamphlets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.